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Anarchist Organisation
Practice as Theory Actualised
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as those which are authoritarian (top-down) and those which are libertarian (bottom-up). Genuine liberty necessitates groups that are free to join *and* are free internally as voluntary *archy* is not *anarchy*. Anarchist organisational principles are core because they intersect with other core concepts by *expressing them*.

[87]Proudhon, *Système des contradictions économiques ou Philosophie de la misère* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1846) I: 75

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sive proposition" that we are born free and equal "into a defence of civil subjection" for "the employment contract (like the marriage contract) is not an exchange; both contracts create social relations that endure over time – social relations of subordination."[90]

Like democracy, anarchism saw its task as seeking a form of organisation within which freedom was protected. In contrast to the stereotype of anarchism as an impractical dream without an understanding of the complexities of the modern world, anarchists have spent considerable time discussing how to organise to meet social needs in a world marked by large-scale industry and ever wider personal and social interactions while ensuring individual and social freedom. Anarchist critiques of Rousseau are driven not by a rejection of democracy but rather a desire to see a *genuine* one created. Woodcock was wrong both logically and historically to proclaim that "the ideal of anarchism, far from being democracy carried to its logical end, is much nearer to aristocracy universalised and purified."[91]

To "contract a relationship of voluntary servitude" was inconsistent with anarchist principles as "the freedom of every individual is inalienable" and so associations could have no other footing "but the utmost equality and reciprocity."[92] Anarchism values individual liberty but sees it a product of social interaction and so embraces the necessity of equality within groups to ensure it remains meaningful. This, in turn, means embracing a critique of property to ensure that those who join a workplace are associates rather than master and servants. Finally, if self-management is applicable within the workplace then it is also applicable for all social and private associations.

Anarchism recognises that there are many types of organisation – those which are forced upon you and those you freely join as well

[90] Pateman, *Sexual*, 39, 148
[91] Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 31
[92] Bakunin, *Selected*, 147, 68

is *ideology* which blinds Rothbard and Nozick to the obvious: "if you have unbridled capitalism, you will have all kinds of authority: you will have *extreme* authority."[87]

The contradictions of "libertarianism" also shows that historical understanding and context is important. It does *not* afford "a typical example of a gravitational shift within conventional ideologies that obscures an ideology's foundational principles by reorganising the core units of furniture." Locke shows this is not the case for rather than "crowding out or demoting other liberal core concepts", this ideology sees itself as clearing the room of furniture which has no place in it. It is *not* the case that its advocates "overemphasize individual liberty at the expense of other liberal values"[88] for they do *not* "expand the liberty theme" but rather aim to restrict it – for the many.

Once it is realised that core principle of "libertarianism" is property rather than liberty then it is must be renamed to *propertarianism*.

Conclusion

Organisation is a fundamental aspect of any theory simply because it shows how it is applied. If an ideology places organisation to the periphery then its adherents are not particularly bothered by their stated core principles for it expresses an indifference to whether they are achieved in practice.

Anarchism is part of the reaction to liberalism and its production of both "industrial servitude" and "obedient *subjects* to a central authority."[89] Liberalism is a "theoretical strategy that justifies subjection by presenting it as freedom". It has "turned a subver-

[87] Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky* (New York: The New Press, 2002), Peter R. Mitchell and John Schoeffel (eds.), 200

[88] Freeden, 95, 64

[89] Kropotkin, *Anarchism*, 137

> "organisation, that is to say, association for a specific purpose and with the structure and means required to attain it, is a necessary aspect of social life. A man in isolation cannot even live the life of a beast… Having therefore to join with other humans… he must submit to the will of others (be enslaved) or subject others to his will (be in authority) or live with others in fraternal agreement in the interests of the greatest good of all (be an associate). Nobody can escape from this necessity." – Errico Malatesta[1]

Introduction

Rather than being a peripheral concept, organisation is fundamentally a core aspect of any ideology as it is "the point where concepts lose their abstraction" and "are interwoven with the concrete practices sanctioned or condemned by an ideology".[2] What organisational forms an ideology advocates say far more about its *actual* core values than the words it uses.

George Woodcock proclaimed that "it seems evident that logically pure anarchism goes against its own nature when it attempts to create elaborate international or even national organisations, which need a measure of rigidity and centralisation to survive." A syndicalist union, in contrast, needs "relatively stable organisations and succeeds in creating them precisely because it moves in a world that is only partly governed by anarchist ideals". He reflected the opinions a large band of more hostile commentators on anarchism who inflict a fundamental irrationality on anarchists. If "pure" anarchism is against any form of organisation beyond its

[1] *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* (London: Freedom Press, 1993),Vernon Richards (ed.), 84–5

[2] Michael Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62

"natural unit" of the "loose and flexible affinity group" then few sensible people would embrace it for neither a rail network nor a hospital could be reliably run by such a unit.[3]

However, if we accept that anarchists are no different from other social activists and so fundamentally rational and realistic people as Davide Turcato correctly argues[4] then we need to admit that anarchist theoreticians and activists would not be advocating an ideal that by "its own nature" precludes practical alternatives to the social ills they are protesting against. Theory needs to be reflected in practice and, as will be shown, anarchists have always addressed the need for social organisation.

The Ideological and Social Context

Anarchist thinkers and activists are not isolated individuals but rather very much part of their society and its popular movements, seeking to gain influence for the ideas they have produced to solve the problems of their society. They are embedded in the world they were seeking to transform, aware of the intellectual and social context in which they live and critically engaged with both.

At the birth of anarchism the ideological context was liberalism (as personified by John Locke) and democracy (as personified by Jean-Jacques Rousseau). The social context was the failure of the French Revolution and the rise of industrial capitalism as well as the oppositional movements each produced: radical republicanism and the labour and socialist movements, respectively.

[3] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (England: Penguin Books, 1986), 226–7

[4] David Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta's Experiments with Revolution, 1889–1900* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2015)

So if "market forces" ("voluntary exchanges") result in the few owning most of the property then this is unproblematic and raises no questions about the (lack of) liberty of the working class but if people are placed *in exactly the same situation* as a result of coercion then it is a case of "economic power" and "masters".

Such is the danger of ideology that it allows someone to write a book that actually refutes his own arguments.

This shows the importance of organisation to a political theory. Anarchism by placing liberty as a priority principle took it seriously and recognised the obvious contradictions in defining (limiting!) it to just consent. They opposed the liberal attempt to decontest the notion by pointing to its practice. That Nozick – repeating Locke[84] – can ask whether "a free system would allow" someone "to sell himself into slavery" and answer "I believe that it would"[85] shows the correctness of anarchism.

The apparent paradox of why an ideology self-proclaimed as "libertarian" is not particularly interested in liberty and justifies numerous obviously authoritarian social relations (up to and including voluntary slavery and dictatorship) is not a paradox at all. Contract in the liberal sense "always generates political right in the form of relations of domination and subordination" and so rather than "undermining subordination, contract theorists justified modern civil subjection."[86]

The farcical self-contradictions that Rothbard repeatedly gets himself into shows why "every society declines the moment it falls into the hands of the ideologists"[87]. At its worse, ideology allows its believers to not only ignore – even justify – social injustice but also to contradict their stated aspirations and abuse logic. While it may be argued that it is only by using ideology that we can expose this kind of contradiction, the fundamental problem is that it

[84] Locke, *Treatises*, 284–5

[85] Nozick, 371

[86] Pateman, *Sexual*, 8, 40

he sees fit. Rothbard then admits people would be "living under a regime no less despotic than the one they had been battling for so long. Perhaps, indeed, *more* despotic, for now the king and his relatives can claim for themselves the libertarians' very principle of the absolute right of private property, an absoluteness which they might not have dared to claim before."[80]

While Rothbard rejects this "cunning stratagem" he failed to note how this argument undermines his own claims. *As he himself argues*, not only does the property owner have the same monopoly of power over a given area as the state, this is *more* despotic. He fails to notice that if the state owning its territory makes it ("as well as the King in the Middle Ages") "a feudal overlord"[81] then this makes the capitalist or landlord a feudal overlord within "libertarianism." It is a strange ideology that proclaims itself liberty-loving yet embraces factory feudalism and office oligarchy.

The one remaining defence of "libertarianism" is that these absolutist social relationships are fine because they are voluntary in nature for there is no such a thing as economic power under capitalism.[82] It is easy to refute such claims with Rothbard's words on the abolition of slavery and serfdom in the 19th century:

> "The *bodies* of the oppressed were freed, but the property which they had worked and eminently deserved to own, remained in the hands of their former oppressors. With economic power thus remaining in their hands, the former lords soon found themselves virtual masters once more of what were now free tenants or farm labourers. The serfs and slaves had tasted freedom, but had been cruelly derived of its fruits."[83]

[80] Rothbard, 54
[81] Rothbard, 171
[82] Rothbard, 221–2
[83] Rothbard, 74

Locke: Justifying Subordinate Relations

Liberalism is usually associated with John Locke yet we cannot understand him if he has "modern liberal-democratic assumptions read into his political thought."[5] His theory is not primarily concerned with defending liberty but rather property and the power that comes with it.

Locke takes wage-labour ("*Master* and *Servant*") as existing in his "state of nature". Thus "a *Master of a Family*" rules over others expressed by "all these subordinate relations of *Wife*, *Children*, *Servants*, and *Slaves*" and with "a very distinct and differently limited *Power*". The power from wealth, of "a *Master* over his Servant, a *Husband* over his Wife, and a *Lord* over his Slave", was fine as long as it did not take the form of a political power, namely "a *Right* of making Laws with Penalties of Death, and consequently all less Penalties". However, as the state had the right "for the Regulating and Preserving of Property, and of employing the force of the Community, in the Execution of such Laws"[6], the property owner could expect the full backing of the state in ensuring his authority was obeyed.

For Locke allegedly free and equal individuals create organisations in which the few rule the many. Yet the objection remains: "it is hard to see why a free and equal individual should have sufficient good reason to subordinate herself to another."[7] He rose to this challenge with the liberal use of the word consent and a "just-so" story to justify property inequality. Land is given to everyone in common by God while labour "is the unquestionable property of the labourer". He argues people who have taken the produce of the commons can appropriate the commons themselves "where there

[5] C. B Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 194
[6] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Peter Laslett (ed.), 322, 323, 268
[7] Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 40

is enough, and as good, left in common for others."[8] Yet this limitation is quickly overcome[9] and so "by a tacit and voluntary consent" there is "a disproportionate and unequal Possession of the Earth"[10].

Any agreement between the rich and proletariat would favour the former and once the worker has consented to being under the authority of the wealthy then his labour and its product is no longer his: "Thus the grass my horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut; and the Ore I have digg'd… become my *Property*." The workers' labour "hath fixed [his employer's] property" in both the product and common resources worked upon.[11] Locke's defence of property as resting on labour becomes the means to derive the worker of the full product of her labour.[12]

Once the land is appropriated and wealth accumulated in a few hands then this few combine to form a political state because the previous government – a monarchy – no longer acts as an impartial umpire and takes a self-interested part in the numerous conflicts between property owners which turn "the state of nature" into "the state of war". The Monarch exercises absolute power over the property owners which necessitates creating a political power which defends property and this "turns out to be the majority of the representatives, and the latter are chosen by the propertied", that is "males who own substantial amounts of material property" and so "politically relevant members of society." The liberal state "stands over and above, and external to, the world of everyday life."[13]

While the "labouring class is a necessary part of the nation its members are not in fact full members of the body politic and have no claim to be so". Locke considered "all men as members [of civil

[8] Locke, 288
[9] Macpherson, 203–20
[10] Locke, 302
[11] Locke, 289
[12] Macpherson, 214–5
[13] Carole Pateman, *The Problem of Political Obligation: A Critique of Liberal Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 67–72

> said to act as does any other owner who sets down rules for people living on his property."[77]

The question now becomes one not of *liberty* within an association but whether those who hold power ("sets down rules") do so legitimately or not and this relates to *property*. Rothbard argues that the state does not "justly" own its territory and asserts that his "homesteading theory" of the creation of private property "suffices to demolish any such pretensions by the State apparatus" and so the problem with the state is that it "claims and exercises a compulsory monopoly of defence and ultimate decision-making over an area larger than an individual's justly-acquired property."[78] Yet private property has never been acquired in the form Rothbard (echoing Locke) suggested but has been bound-up with state and private coercion – assuming his theory was robust, which it is not. His attempt to eliminate the obvious difficulties he faces involves "adding mythical and imaginary happenings to make up for the 'reality gaps'"[79] along with hopes that he found people "simple enough to believe him".

Ignoring Rothbard's *immaculate conception of property* as being as unrelated to reality as Locke's social contract theory of the state, the question arises why current and future generations should be dispossessed from liberty by the private hierarchies associated with property. Rothbard helps us answer that question by a hypothetical example of a country whose King, threatened by a rising "libertarian" movement, responses by "employ[ing] a cunning stratagem," namely he "proclaims his government to be dissolved, but just before doing so he arbitrarily parcels out the entire land area of his kingdom to the 'ownership' of himself and his relatives." Rather than taxes, his subjects now pay rent and he can "regulate the lives of all the people who presume to live on" his property as

[77] Rothbard, 170
[78] Rothbard, 171, 173
[79] Freeden, 106

> nist or syndicalist variety. But now we had taken it over"[73]

Second, and more importantly, "libertarianism" ignores what drove the creation of anarchism and returns to the authoritarianism of classical liberalism.

This is shown when Rothbard proclaims that the state "arrogates to itself a monopoly of force, of ultimate decision-making power, over a given territorial area" then, buried in the chapter's end notes, quietly admits that "[o]bviously, in a free society, Smith has the ultimate decision-making power over his own just property, Jones over his, etc."[74] He does not mention the obvious – they also have "ultimate decision-making power" *over those who use that property*. Robert Nozick was more open: "if one starts a private town… persons who chose to move there or later remain there would have no *right* to a say in how the town was run".[75]

While some argue that it "would be logically inconsistent for an ideology to defend individual choice and to deny people the vote"[76], for "libertarianism" the opposite is the case. Yet the contradictions – "libertarians" advocating dictatorship, a definition of the state (evil) identical to property (good) – are all too clear as anarchists had denounced since 1840. Ironically, Rothbard himself shows the validity of the anarchist critique:

> "*If* the State may be said to properly *own* its territory, then it is proper for it to make rules for everyone who presumes to live in that area… *So long* as the State permits its subjects to leave its territory, then, it can be

[73] *The Betrayal of the American Right* (Auburn, Alabama: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 207), 83

[74] *The Ethics of Liberty* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1982), 170, 173

[75] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1974), 270

[76] Freeden, 55

society] for the purposes of being ruled and only the men of estate as members for the purpose of ruling" (or, "more accurately, the right to control any government"). The working class, the actual majority, "were in but of civil society" and so he "would have no difficulty, therefore, in thinking of the state as a joint-stock company of owners whose majority of decision binds not only themselves but also their employees."[14]

Locke "was not a democrat at all."[15] This is shown by his *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* that postulates rule by wealthy landlords with hereditary serfs ("leet-men"). It aimed to "avoid erecting a numerous democracy" and so "we, the lords and proprietors of the province… have agreed to this following form of government". Eight "proprietors" received one-fifth of the land in perpetually while "the hereditary nobility" received another fifth. The parliament would be made up "of the proprietors or their deputies" and "one freeholder out of every precinct." The freeholder members of parliament had to have more than "five hundred acres of freehold within the precinct for which he is chosen" while the electorate would be made up of those who have more than "fifty acres of freehold within the said precinct."[16]

Locke attacked both absolutist monarchy *and* radical democracy and his theory gives "justification to, and is expressly designed to preserve, the social inequalities of the capitalist market economy"[17]. Authoritarian (master-servant) social relationships were *precisely* what his theory of property in the person sought to justify. The nature of his theory can be seen from the organisation within which he sought to apply it: the class state based on wealthy landlords assembling together in a Parliament to rule themselves and their servants is exposed in his organisation for Carolina.

[14] Macpherson, 221–2, 248–9, 227, 251

[15] Macpherson, 196

[16] John Locke, *Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Mark Goldie (ed.), 161–175

[17] Pateman, *Problem*, 68

Rousseau: Liberty cannot exist without Equality

Which brings us to Jean-Jacques Rousseau who "denounces the liberal social contract as an illegitimate fraud".[18] If Locke proclaimed "we are *born Free*"[19] then Rousseau replied that we are "everywhere in chains"[20] and sought to explain why Liberalism produced and justified this.

Critiquing Liberalism's "just-so" story of state formation, Rousseau noted how "[a]ll ran headlong to their chains, in the hopes of securing their liberty" when, in fact, it "bound new fetters on the poor, and gave new powers to the rich; which irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property and inequality, converted clever usurpation into unalterable right, and, for the advantage of a few ambitious individuals, subjected all mankind to perpetual labour, slavery, and wretchedness."[21] The liberal social contract was based on property and not liberty:

> "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows, 'Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.'"[22]

In contrast to liberalism, Rousseau recognised that the "greatest good of all" reduces down to "two main subjects, liberty and equal-

[18] Pateman, *Problem*, 142

[19] Locke, *Treatises,* 308

[20] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: Everyman, 1996), 181

[21] Rousseau, 99

[22] Rousseau, 84

majority.[71] Thus we have majority decision making but not majority government for anarchists "have the special mission of being vigilant custodians of freedom, against all aspirants to power and against the possible tyranny of the majority".[72] The case for anarchy – self-management – is not that the majority is always right but that no minority can be trusted not to prefer its own advantage if given power.

Libertarians against "Libertarianism" (or the dangers of ideology)

Many anarchists are sympathetic to the saying – popularised if not invented by the Situationists – that the difference between theory and ideology is that the former is when you have ideas and the latter is when ideas have you. As such, anarchists tend to suggest that theirs is not an ideology but rather a theory. The dangers of ideology can best be seen by comparing libertarian theory with the ideology that is called "libertarianism" by its proponents.

Yet how can anarchists – who have called themselves libertarians since 1857 – be against "libertarianism"?

First, because the advocates of "libertarianism" did not let their ideological support for absolute property rights stop them knowingly stealing the name from those who invented and used it. As Murray Rothbard recalled:

> "One gratifying aspect of our rise to some prominence [in 1950s America] is that, for the first time in my memory, we, 'our side,' had captured a crucial word from the enemy… 'Libertarians'… had long been simply a polite word for left-wing [*sic*!] anarchists, that is for anti-private property anarchists, either of the commu-

[71] Malatesta, *Freedom*, 488–9

[72] Malatesta, *Life*, 161

the right to expel a minority (free association means the freedom *not* to associate).

Rather than constantly governed by the few – whether that few is the elected of the majority matters little – individuals within an association will participate in decisions and will sometimes be in the majority, sometimes not, in numerous groups and federations. The "necessity of division and association of labour" means "I take and I give – such is human life. Each is an authoritative leader and in turn is led by others. Accordingly there is no fixed and constant authority, but continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination."[68] No one's permanent position would be one of subjection as under statism, capitalism, patriarchy or racism.

This self-managed society was termed by Proudhon a "Labour Democracy"[69] to clearly differentiate it from existing – bourgeois – forms of democracy:

> "no longer do we have the abstraction of people's sovereignty as in the '93 Constitution and the others that followed it, and in Rousseau's *Social Contract*. Instead it becomes an effective sovereignty of the labouring masses which rule and govern… the labouring masses are actually, positively and effectively sovereign: how could they not be when the economic organism – labour, capital, property and assets – belongs to them entirely"[70]

None of this assumes that the majority has the *right* to rule the minority just that, in general, members who join a group do so understanding the decision making process within the association and can leave if they no longer agree with specific decisions of the

[68] Bakunin, *Political*, 353–4
[69] *Property*, 724
[70] *Property*, 760–1

ity" for the former "cannot exist without" the latter.[23] He rightly argued that contracts between the wealthy few and the many poor will always benefit the former and, for the latter, become little more than the freedom to pick a master:

> "The terms of social compact between these two estates of men may be summed up in a few words: 'You have need of me, because I am rich and you are poor. We will therefore come to an agreement. I will permit you to have the honour of serving me, on condition that you bestow on me that little you have left, in return for the pains I shall take to command you.'"[24]

Thus "laws are always useful to those with possessions and harmful to those who have nothing: from which it follows that the social state is advantageous to men only when all posses something and none has too much." The ideal society was one where "no citizen shall be rich enough to buy another and none so poor as to be forced to sell himself."[25] Rousseau goes to the core problem with liberalism:

> "That a rich and powerful man, having acquired immense possessions in land, should impose laws on those who want to establish themselves there, and that he should only allow them to do so on condition that they accept his supreme authority and obey all his wishes; that, I can still conceive… Would not this tyrannical act contain a double usurpation: that on the ownership of the land and that on the liberty of the inhabitants?"[26]

[23] Rousseau, 225
[24] Rousseau, 162
[25] Rousseau, 199, 225
[26] Rousseau, 316

We cannot really "divest ourselves of our liberty" like "we transfer our property from one to another by contracts" for "the property I alienate becomes quite foreign to me, nor can I suffer from abuse of it" but it "concerns me that my liberty should not be abused". A contract "binding the one to command and the other to obey" would be "an odd kind of contract to enter into" and so "to bind itself to obey a master" would be "illegitimate." This was the "voluntary establishment of tyranny" and if "the people promises simply to obey, by that very act dissolves itself". The "moment a master exists, there is no longer a Sovereign" and to "renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties."[27]

Political association had to be participatory. The "people of England regards itself as free; but it is grossly mistaken; it is free only during the election of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing." Sovereignty, "for the same reason as makes it inalienable, is indivisible" and so it was "essential, if the general will is to be able to express itself, that there should be no partial society within the State". Any government "is simply and solely a commission, an employment" and "mere officials of the Sovereign". The "people, being subject to the laws, ought to be their author" and so the "problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before."[28]

The democratic critique of liberalism produced both the idea of popular sovereignty and the importance of equality. Rousseau's ideas were never implemented during his lifetime and so it is his followers during the French Revolution we need to turn. This revolution was a conflict between both the people and the monarchy

[27] Rousseau, 105, 269, 104, 200, 186

[28] Rousseau, 266, 201, 203–4, 230, 212, 191

is driven by the objective needs of a functional task. A workplace is as big as its output requires ("oceanic steamers cannot be built in village factories"[65]) while a commune can be a village, town or a city. While large organisations would – as is the case now – be subdivided internally into functional groups, this does not change the fact that anarchists have *always* incorporated the fact of, and need for, large-scale organisation and industry. Indeed, federalism is advocated precisely to co-ordinate, plan and provide services judged by those who need them to be better done together.

What level a specific industry or service should be co-ordinated at will vary depending on what it is so no hard and fast rule can be formulated but the basic principle is that groups "unite with each other in a mutual and equal way, for one or more specific tasks, whose responsibility specially and exclusively falls to the delegates of the federation". For example, it is a case of "the initiative of communes and departments as to works that operate within their jurisdiction" plus "the initiative of the workers companies as to carrying the works out" for the "direct, sovereign initiative of localities, in arranging for public works that belong to them, is a consequence of the democratic principle and the free contract".[66]

In short, *self-governing individuals join self-governing groups that, in turn, join self-governing federations.*

Individuals are free in-so-far as the associations they join are participatory and without hierarchy. Yet anarchists do not think that there will be unanimity within each group for "*variety, conflict even, is life"* while *"uniformity is death*".[67] In disagreements, the minority has a choice – agree to work with the majority, leave the association or practice civil disobedience to convince the majority of the errors of their way. Which option is best depends on the nature of the decision and the group. Similarly, the majority has

[65] *Direct*, 665

[66] *Property*, 969, 594–5

[67] Kropotkin, *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings* (New York: Dover Press, 2002), Roger N. Baldwin (ed.), 143

ments between them… for all sorts of work in common, for intellectual pursuits, or simply for pleasure."[63]

The permanence of specific groups or agreements is very much dependent on the ***functional*** needs of the situation or the wishes of the participants and so cannot be formalised by a hard or fast rule. Some agreements will be fleeting (to provide specific goods or services) and others more-or-less permanent (to provide healthcare or railway networks). The key is that the federation lasts as long as is required, that association is produced by objective needs and does not exist for its own sake.

The question is "to organise universal suffrage in its plenitude" for each "function, industrial or otherwise". Each functional group would elect its own delegates in its own separate bodies meaning "the country governs itself solely by means of its electoral initiative" and "it is no longer governed." Such popular assemblies are "a matter of the organisation of universal suffrage in all its forms, of the very structure of Democracy itself." Instead of centralising all issues into the hands of one assembly, there would be a multitude of assemblies each covering a specific social function for "a society of free men" is based on the "associating with different groups according to the nature of their industries or their interests and by whom neither collective nor individual sovereignty is ever abdicated or delegated" and so "the Government has ceased to exist as a result of universal suffrage". This "truly democratic regime, with its unity *at the bottom* and its separation *at the top*, [is] the reverse of what now exists" and "centralisation [would] be effected from the bottom to the top, from the circumference to the centre, and that all functions be independent and govern themselves independently".[64]

While some suggest that anarchism inherently supports small-scale groups or industry this is not the case. It recognises that size

[63] *Direct*, 105

[64] *Property*, 439–41, 461, 446–7

but also between the rising bourgeoisie and the toiling masses.[29] Power under the Jacobins was centralised into fewer and fewer hands – from the electorate into representatives, from representatives into the government, from the government, finally, into the hands of Robespierre. The sections of Paris, unions and strikes were repressed as being "states within the state" for the Republic "called itself one and *indivisible*" for a reason while the centralisation of more and more decisions produced a bureaucracy of "thousands of officials… to read, classify, and form an opinion" on them all.[30]

Associationism: Fraternity does not stop at the workplace door

Rousseau presented a critique of inequality but did not fundamentally criticise property. As he lived before the rise of industrial capitalism, with peasant farming and artisan workshops predominating, wage-labour was not widespread nor of prime importance in continental Europe. The solution for inequality was clear and did not need question property (land reform) while the small-scale of technology meant that most could become artisans working with their own tools in their own workshop.

The French Revolution, however, raised the issue of guilds and journeymen societies while one building employer reported that the "workers, by an absurd parody of the government, regard their work as their property, the building site as a Republic of which they are jointly citizens, and believe in consequence that it belongs to them to name their own bosses, their inspectors and arbitrarily to share out the work amongst themselves."[31] These perspec-

[29] Peter Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793* (London: Orbach and Chambers Ltd, 1971)

[30] Peter Kropotkin, *The State: Its Historic Role* (London: Freedom Press, 1987), 51–4

[31] quoted by Roger Magraw, *A History of the French Working Class* (Oxford/Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992) I: 24–25

tives only increased when the industrial revolution transformed France. Faced with the obvious authoritarianism within the factory, ex-artisans sought a solution appropriate to the changed circumstances they faced.

The workplace could not be broken up without destroying machines and the advantages they produced alongside master-servant relations. This created a new perspective in the new working class. "Associationism was born during the waves of strikes and organised protests provoked by the Revolution of 1830" when "there appeared a workers' newspaper" which "suggested cooperative associations as the only way to end capitalist exploitation." This paper, *l'Artisan, journal de la class ouvrière*, was produced by printers and "laid the basis for trade socialism."[32] While some intellectuals – the utopian socialists like Saint-Simon and Fourier – had raised various schemes for improving society, this was the first example of workers themselves making practical suggestions for their own liberation.

Across France, workers started to combine their existing organisations for mutual support with trade union activity as well as visions of a world without masters. This process intertwined with existing political Republican ideas. Radical neo-Jacobins recruited amongst workers which resulted in a "two-way interchange of ideas" with them taking up "the ideology of producer associationism which was becoming central" to artisanal socialism. Louis Blanc was the most public expression of this process and his "distinctive contribution was to fuse the associationist idea with the Jacobin-Republican political tradition"[33] but there were many others who expressed the associational idea in different forms.[34]

[32] Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labour Movement 1830–1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1980), 32–3

[33] Magraw, 55, 72

[34] K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) 127–140

ters for they would be "always under the direct control of the population" and express the "decisions taken at popular assemblies."[59] How much an individual participates is up to each person but the option to take part is always there for anarchist organisation is rooted in "the possibility of calling the general assembly whenever it was wanted by the members of the section and of discussing everything in the general assembly".[60]

Just as individuals associate within groups, so groups will need to co-ordinate their activities by the same kind of horizontal links that exist within an association. In this ***federalist*** structure decisions are co-ordinated by elected, mandated and recallable delegates rather than representatives.[61] This would, by definition, be a decentralised organisation for power remains at the base in the individuals who associate together into groups rather than at the top in the hands of a few representatives and the bureaucracies needed to support them. This would be in all areas of life: economic ("federations of Trade Unions"), social ("independent Communes") and personal ("free combines and societies").[62] Federation is extensive:

> "society will be composed of a multitude of associations, federated for all the purposes which require federation: trade federations for production of all sorts… federations of communes among themselves, and federations of communes with trade organisations; and finally, wider groups covering all the country, or several countries, composed of men who collaborate for the satisfaction of such economic, intellectual, artistic, and moral needs as are not limited to a given territory. All these will combine directly, by means of free agree-

[59] Malatesta, *Life*, 175, 129

[60] *Direct*, 426

[61] Proudhon, *Property*, 377; Bakunin, *Selected*, 170–2, Malatesta, *Freedom*, 63

[62] *Direct*, 188

Yet while democratic, anarchist organisations have to be ***egalitarian*** for simply electing a few who govern the rest reintroduces hierarchies, albeit elected ones, and least we forget government is the "delegation of power, that is, the abdication of the initiative and sovereignty of every one into the hands of the few."[56] As the "people does not govern itself" it meant that "free and equal citizens, not about to abdicate their rights to the care of the few, will seek some new form of organisation that allows them to manage their affairs for themselves". Kropotkin pointed to the sections of the French Revolution as popular institutions "not separated from the people" and "remained of the people, and this is what made the revolutionary power of these organisations." Rather than nominating representatives and disbanding, the sections "remained and organised themselves, on their own initiative, as permanent organs of the municipal administration" and "were practising what was described later on as Direct Self-Government". These were "the principles of anarchism" and they "had their origin, not in theoretic speculations, but in the *deeds* of the Great French Revolution" and "by acting in this way – and the libertarians would no doubt do the same today – the districts of Paris laid the foundations of a new, free, social organisation" for "the Commune of Paris was not to be a governed State, but a people governing itself directly – when possible – without intermediaries, without masters."[57]

Anarchists tend to call this self-management because democracy has, in practice, meant electing a government rather than a group of people governing themselves. Yet self-management does not preclude the need to "allocate a given task to others" in the shape of committees but it is a case of group members "not abdicating their own sovereignty" by "turning some into directors and chiefs".[58] Committees would be agents of the group rather than their mas-

[56] Malatesta, *The Method of Freedom: An Errico Malatesta Reader* (Edinburgh/Oakland, AK Press, 2014), Davide Turcato (Ed.), 136

[57] *Direct*, 225, 228, 419–25

[58] Malatesta, *Freedom*, 214

Anarchist Organisation: Laying the foundations

By 1840 there was not only a wide appreciation for the need of some kind of association to replace capitalism but also extensive workers organisations across France which aimed to do so. It was in this context[35] that a working man, a printer by trade, would transform socialist politics forever by proclaiming himself an anarchist.

While Proudhon will forever be linked with "property is theft", this was just one part of his answer to *What is Property?*. The other was "property is despotism" for property "violates equality by the rights of exclusion and increase, and freedom by despotism." Anarchy was "the absence of a master, of a sovereign," while proprietor was "synonymous" with "sovereign," for he "imposes his will as law, and suffers neither contradiction nor control" and "each proprietor is sovereign lord within the sphere of his property".[36] He echoed Rousseau:

> "Liberty is inviolable. I can neither sell nor alienate my liberty; every contract, every condition of a contract, which has in view the alienation or suspension of liberty, is null… Liberty is the original condition of man; to renounce liberty is to renounce the nature of man"[37]

This brings him into conflict with Locke. Rejecting the notion that master-servant contracts were valid, he dismisses its basis of property in the person: "To tell a poor man that he has property because he has arms and legs, – that the hunger from which he suffers, and his power to sleep in the open air are his property, – is to play with words, and add insult to injury." Property, then, is solely

[35] See Vincent for an excellent discussion of this.

[36] *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (Edinburgh/Oakland/Baltimore: AK Press, 2011), Iain McKay (ed.), 132–5

[37] *Property*, 92

material things – land, workplaces, etc. – and their monopolisation results in authoritarian relationships. To "recognise the right of territorial property is to give up labour, since it is to relinquish the means of labour". Property results in the worker having "sold and surrendered his liberty" to the proprietor so ensuring exploitation. Whoever "labours becomes a proprietor" of his product but by that he did "not mean simply (as do our hypocritical economists)" – and Locke – the "proprietor of his allowance, his salary, his wages" but "proprietor of the value which he creates, and by which the master alone profits." Locke is also the target for Proudhon's comment that "the horse… and ox… produce with us, but are not associated with us; we take their product, but do not share it with them. The animals and workers whom we employ hold the same relation to us."[38]

Yet if Locke was rejected, Rousseau did not provide a genuine solution.[39] While Proudhon favourably quotes Rousseau on "the conditions of the social pact"[40] he also shows how democracy failed to achieve its goals.

First, Rousseau's "programme speaks of political rights only; it does not mention economic rights." By ignoring the economic sphere he ends up creating a class state in which the Republic "is nothing but the offensive and defensive alliance of those who possess, against those who do not possess", a "coalition of the barons of property, commerce and industry against the disinherited lower class".[41]

Second, Rousseau's political solution – a centralised, unitarian, indivisible republic – recreates the division between rulers and ruled which it claims to end. Thus, "having laid down as a principle that the people are the only sovereign", Rousseau "quietly abandent of fascism: decisions and control are strictly top-down."[53] This means that "staying *free* is, for the working man who *has to sell* his labour, an impossibility" and so a free economy existed only when "associations of men and women who would work on the land, in the factories, in the mines, and so on, became themselves the managers of production."[54]

Collective decision making (democracy) must be contrasted to "the principle of *authority*, that is, the eminently theological, metaphysical, and political idea that the masses, *always* incapable of governing themselves, must at all times submit to the benevolent yoke of a wisdom and a justice imposed upon them, in some way or other, from above." Long before Rosa Luxemburg made the same distinction, Bakunin contrasted two kinds of discipline: an "authoritarian conception" which "signifies despotism on the one hand and blind automatic submission to authority on the other" and another "not automatic but voluntary and intelligently understood" which is "necessary whenever a greater number of individuals undertake any kind of collective work or action." The latter was "simply the voluntary and considered co-ordination of all individual efforts for a common purpose" and did not preclude "a natural division of functions according to the aptitude of each, assessed and judged by the collective whole". However, "no function remains fixed and it will not remain permanently and irrevocably attached to any one person. Hierarchical order and promotion do not exist, so that the executive of yesterday can become the subordinate of tomorrow." In this way "power, properly speaking, no longer exists. Power is diffused to the collectivity and becomes the true expression of the liberty of everyone, the faithful and sincere realisation of the will of all".[55]

[38] *Property,* 95, 106, 117, 114, 129

[39] Aaron Noland, "Proudhon and Rousseau", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28:1 (Jan-Mar 1967)

[40] *Property*, 565

[41] *Property*, 566

[53] Noam Chomsky, *Letters from Lexington: Reflections on Propaganda* (Monroe/Edinburgh: Common Courage Press/AK Press, 1993), 127

[54] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 160, 187

[55] *Bakunin on Anarchism*, 408, 142, 414–5; *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), Mary-Alice Waters (ed.), 119–20

anarchism was born precisely to do so and did so with a single word: *association*.

Anarchists recognise that freedom is a product of interaction between people and it is *how* we associate which determines whether we are free or not. While anarchism's perspective is social, Engels' is fundamentally liberal as it sees isolation as true freedom and so confuses agreement with authority, co-operation with coercion.

The *real* question is simple: is an association based on self-government of its members or do a few decide for all? So to qualify as libertarian an organisation must be based on certain core principles that ensure that liberty is not reduced to simply picking masters.

An organisation that is not ***voluntary*** would hardly be free. So free association requires that individuals decide for themselves which groups to join. Yet it is more than that for "to promise to obey is to deny or to limit, to a greater or lesser degree, individuals' freedom and equality… To promise to obey is to state, that in certain areas, the person making the promise is no longer free to exercise her capacities and decide upon her own actions, and is no longer equal, but subordinate."[51] Being free to join a group that is internally hierarchical is simply voluntary *archy* and so groups have to be ***democratic*** so that those subject to decisions make them.

Thus *how* we organise was what mattered for "man in isolation can have no awareness of his liberty. Being free for man means being acknowledged, considered and treated as such by another man. Liberty is therefore a feature not of isolation but of interaction, not of exclusion but rather of connection".[52] This means freedom does not end at the workplace door or with a marriage ceremony. The capitalist workplace is not consistent with anarchism for, lest we forget, "a corporation, factory or business is the economic equivalent of a small state, governed autocratically from above".

[51] Pateman, *Problem*, 19

[52] Bakunin, *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), Arthur Lehning (ed.), 131, 135, 147

dons and discards this principle" and so "the citizen has nothing left but the power of choosing his rulers by a plurality vote". Echoing Rousseau's own words about England, Proudhon proclaimed that France was "a quasi-democratic Republic" in which citizens "are permitted, every third or fourth year, to elect, first, the Legislative Power, second, the Executive Power. The duration of this participation in the Government for the popular collectivity is brief… The President and the Representatives, once elected, are the masters; all the rest obey. They are *subjects*, to be *governed* and to be taxed, without surcease."[42]

Democracy was simply not democratic enough. It "is the negation of the People's sovereignty" as it "says that *the People reigns and does not govern*, which is to deny the Revolution" and concludes "the People cannot govern itself and is forced to hand itself over to representatives". Instead of a democracy understood in the manner of the Jacobin left, Proudhon suggested in anarchy "all citizens… reign and govern" for they "directly participate in the legislation and the government as they participate in the production and circulation of wealth". While the state "is the external constitution of the social power" in which others "are charged with governing [the People], with managing its affairs", anarchists affirm that "the people, that society… can and ought to govern itself by itself… without masters and servants". When anarchists "deny the State" they "affirm in the same breath the autonomy of the people" for "the only way to organise democratic government is to abolish government."[43]

This meant a real democracy requires decentralisation and federation otherwise "democracy is a fraud, and the sovereignty of the People a joke". The communes that "comprise the confederation" would be "self-governing, self-judging and self-administering in complete sovereignty", "universal suffrage form [their] basis" and

[42] *Property*, 566, 573

[43] *Property*, 261, 267, 280, 482–5

each "enjoys a right of secession". Delegates would replace representatives for we "can follow" those we elect "step-by-step in their legislative acts and their votes" and "make them transmit our arguments" and when "we are discontented, we will recall and dismiss them." The electoral principle needed "the imperative mandate, and permanent revocability" as its "most immediate and incontestable consequences". In "a mutualist confederation, the citizen gives up none of his freedom, as Rousseau requires him to do for the governance of his republic!"[44]

These democratic principles must also be extended to the economy. Property "degrades us, by making us servants and tyrants to one another" for the wage-workers' lot was to "work under a master" to whom they had "sold their arms and parted with their liberty". Freedom and property were incompatible and to secure the former for all we must seek the "entire abolition" of the latter for "all accumulated capital being social property, no one can be its exclusive proprietor" and "the land [is] common property". While the *use* of property "may be divided" its ownership is "collective and undivided" for while "the right to product is exclusive", the "right to means is common." Anarchy required "industrial democracy" as "leaders, instructors, superintendents" must be "chosen from the workers by the workers themselves" and so everyone "participates… as an active factor" with "a deliberative voice in the council… in accordance with equality." Workplaces must become "worker republics" within an "*agricultural-industrial federation*".[45]

Proudhon, then, stressed the "*abolition of man's exploitation of his fellow-man and abolition of man's government of his fellow-man*" were "one and the same proposition" for "what, in politics, goes under the name of *Authority* is analogous to and synonymous with what is termed, in political economy, *Property*". The "principle of

[44] *Property*, 595, 716, 763, 273, 762

[45] *Property,* 248, 212, 91, 118, 153, 137, 112, 610, 119, 215, 780, 711; also see *Property*, 583–6

AUTHORITY" was "articulated through" both and an "attack upon one is an attack upon the other."[46]

Yet while denouncing both the state and the capitalist workplace as authoritarian and seeking to replace both by associations, Proudhon refused to apply his ideas within the family and advocated patriarchy. This contradiction saw Joseph Déjacque in 1857 applying Proudhon's own ideas to the family for it was a case of placing the "issue of the emancipation of woman in line with the emancipation of the serf" in the workshop so that both enter "the community of anarchy". Proudhon did "cry against the great barons of capital" but would "rebuild a proud barony of man on vassal-woman" and so was "liberal, but not libertarian."[47]

Patriarchy was another *archy* and subsequent anarchists recognised the need for consistency. The fundamental commonality between organisations anarchists oppose – the state, capitalist firms, marriage, etc. – is that they are authoritarian and "power and authority corrupt those who exercise them as much as those who are compelled to submit to them."[48] Anarchists, then, "deny every form of hierarchical organisation"[49]

Anarchist Organisation: Principles and Practice

So anarchists since the first self-proclaimed anarchist text had already answered Engels' question of "how do these people propose to operate a factory, run a railway, or steer a ship without one will that decides in the last resort, without unified direction"?[50]Indeed,

[46] *Property*, 503–6

[47] "The Human Being", available at: anarchism.pageabode.com

[48] Michael Bakunin, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (New York: The Free Press, 1953), G.P. Maximov (ed.), 249

[49] Peter Kropotkin, *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (Edinburgh/Oakland/Baltimore: AK Press, 2014), Iain McKay (ed.), 385

[50] *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 44: 307